

The Novato Historian

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Preserving Novato's History Feature Section

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The Novato Historian

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Novato Boys' Club

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The first Boys' Club was founded in 1860 in Hartford, Connecticut, by three women, Elizabeth Hamersley and sisters Mary and Alice Goodwin. In 1906, 53 independent Boys' Clubs came together in Boston to form a national organization, the Federated Boys' Clubs. In 1931, the organization renamed itself Boys' Clubs of America, and in 1990, to Boys & Girls Clubs of America. Novato over the years has had a number of Boys' Clubs.

The *San Rafael Tocsin* on February 19, 1916, would report: "The boys' class of the Presbyterian Sunday School has organized and call themselves the "Presbyterian Boys' Club," and have chosen blue and white for their colors, and created a yell. They will give their first social affair at Scott's Hall on Tuesday the 2nd, , with Reverend Christenson in charge of the group. When the good weather comes, they will enjoy some out of door sports."

By March 1917, the main part of the Boys' Club would organize as the Boy Scouts. The officers of the club were president, Douglas Bond (15); vice-president, Julius Peterson (15); secretary, Avid Nystrum (16); and treasurer, Horace Nobman (14). The boys would plan a camping trip to Bolinas for that summer and Rev. Christenson would be Scout Master.

Joseph Edmundson McDermed Jr.

Mr. J. E. McDermed organized the Spartan Boys Club and Hawolo Club for girls under sponsorship of the Fruitvale Congregational Church. These groups specialized in athletics, and in 1915 both won silver cups in rowing tournaments at the Panama Pacific International Exposition.

McDermed was the son of pioneers, his father having driven an ox team across the plains in 1852 and his mother, the former Sarah Locke, coming to the Bay Area by sailing ship from New York in 1856. They made their home in Dublin.

The junior Mr. McDermed was first married to Lydia Mary Madge Lewis of Ontario, Canada, and they lived in Dublin for a time, moving to Fruitvale at the time of the 1906 earthquake and fire. The McDermeds moved to Alameda in 1923 where he organized the Alameda Congregational Church Club. In 1932 they would move to Novato.

July 28, 1934 the *Novato Advance* would write: "Open Letter in Interest of Local Boys" Novato, July 25, 1934.

Editor Novato Advance:

Dear Sir: All towns and communities are continually striving to attain publicity and honor by excelling in some form of excitement or enterprise. For several years Novato has not only prided itself, with good reason, but has also been applauded by other places because of its community co-operation as displayed in concrete form in its Community House. No other place of this size, or much larger towns, can show such a well arranged and commodious place for public gatherings, locally built and managed. Having reached such a proud position in the minds of the public, there are many reasons why it should be maintained. First, because of its effect on seekers for homes in this section, and another because of the goodwill and fellowship which it builds into our own social environment.

So it is that we call the attention of those who can thus lead and influence the community to the need of such a tolerable and helpful spirit in the maintenance of the Novato Boys' Club. Every community of whatever size has always more than one form of activity or organization for the teen age boy. And there are enough boys in Novato of that age to build a good live club, and we have one such started.



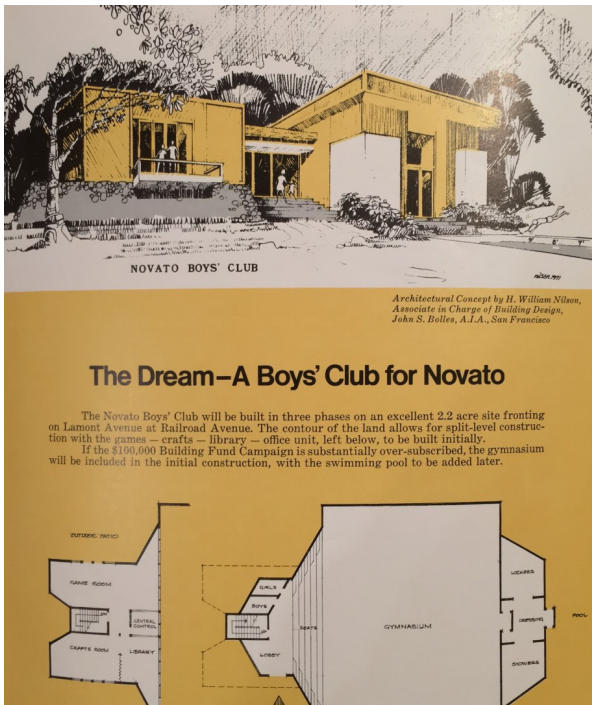
What a Boys' Club building in Novato might look like. This 1966 rendering based on a recommended plans of the Boys' Club of America.

Novato Boys' Club

The Chamber of Commerce has given us the use of one of the railroad cars for a club room. The location of the railroad cars was Reichert Ville. The boys are making every effort to fix it up inside and also to ornament the grounds. This, of course, takes time and labor but if the patience of the objectors will give us the time, we will before long change the tone of the surroundings from what one has termed "an eyesore" to a thing of beauty and an asset of the community. And pleading for a display again of that "Community Fellowship," which, mayhap, has become dormant, but we are sure needs only an arousing that Novato may again be known among the sisterhood of communities as "the place where everyone boosts for public welfare." Cordially, J.E. McDermed."

He would organize right after this letter a Boys' Club in Feb. 1935. The Novato Boys' Club elected officers at their meeting in the Presbyterian Church in 1935." On Oct. 1935, Novato Boys' Club has organized a football team."

As these boys got older they would form the Novato Junior Chamber of Commerce in November 1938.



Sketch of proposed building at Lamont Ave. Designed by H. William Nilsen, of John S. Bolles Architectural Firm.



Backbone of The Boys Club

Pictured here are the 1970 officers, front row, from left to right; Dave Moore, treasurer; Bill Nye, secretary; Paul Scheller, vice president; Everett Stanlake, vice president; Dave Milano, president; and Eugene Trombley, chairman, Back row, from left: Bill French, public relations chairman; Robert Carrow, legal committee chairman; and directors Rev. Lloyd F Gebhart, Ralph Eckhardt, Don Shank, Bob Busher and Larry Vato. - (Novato Advance Photo).

The Boys Club would still be around.

On Sept. 13, 1939 The *Argus* reports: "Novato Boys Club, a group of 15 high school boys, met in the Community House for organization directed by the new recreational director, Gerald Wilson. Plans were discussed for games of football, baseball, basketball and soon trips to out of the way points into the hills.

Nov. 30, 1942, *Argus*: "J.E. McDermed, of Novato is featured in an article in a recent issue of the *Hamiltonian*, as not only one of the first to work at Hamilton Field, but the oldest man now in its employ at present, and for the last nine years. He was there when the base headquarters consisted of a few lines of a blueprint, and the grounds a combination of meadow and marsh land. McDermed, who is janitor at base operations office, first worked in construction, and later as a landscape gardener, doing his bit to make the field its present beauty spot."

In 1947 Mr. McDermed and his wife would move to Pacific Grove and then move back to Novato in 1958.

April 8, 1964, *Independent Journal* announces: "Funeral for Joseph Edmundson McDermed, 95, of 7530 Redwood Highway. He died in a Novato convalescent home after a brief illness. A native of Dublin, Ca, he lived in Marin for many years. After about 10 years in Pacific Grove, he returned to Marin in the mid- 1950's. He was landscape architect until retirement in 1954. He had also been active in youth work in Novato until that time."

Joseph Bonomolo

January 12, 1966 *Novato Advance*: "Meeting Next Month - Plan Formation of Boys Club"

"The organizational phase for a Boys' Club in Novato is commencing under the leadership of Joe Bonomolo, owner of B&B Richfield Service on Diablo Avenue. Bonomolo, finally finding time to devote to his interest, has been contacted by 15 citizens who range from Novato's mayor to contractors to members of various churches that want to help lay the foundations."

The Boys' Club

"A meeting, probably sometime next month, will be held at the council chambers in the Community Clubhouse. At that time E. L. McKenzie of San Francisco will explain how Novatans can participate in the program. McKenzie is the Northern California executive director for Boys' Club of America.

The club will provide both inside and outdoor year-around activities (boxing and baseball are two examples of what can be offered) for youths in the 13 to 19-year-old bracket. Social events are also included."

Bonomolo, a member of such a club as a youngster on the East Coast, feels there's a great need for such an organization in Novato and Marin County and decided to get the ball rolling.

"It's a good place for boys, to use their extra energy in a proper way after school he explained.

After becoming affiliate with the national organization, Novato will probably be able to qualify for financial assistance from big industrial and business firms in the United States, according to Bonomolo."

Bonomolo would seek a Novato City Council seat in April 1966, but he would finish last.

The following is a biography that was in the *Novato Advance* during his run for city council.

"Bonomolo is a native New Yorker. He has lived in California for 27 years, owning a service station and garage in San Francisco for 15 years of that time. He moved to Novato a year ago and now owns the B & B Richfield service station in the Novato Fair Shopping Center. He is the president of the Novato Fair Merchants Association. He and his wife, Celeste, have five children."

Feb 23, 1966, *Novato Advance* – "Elect Boys Club Steering Group"

"Still in the dream-stage, a Boys' Club of Novato took a firm step toward reality when an 11-man steering committee was elected."

"The steering committee said club sparkplug, Joe Bonomolo, will act as a temporary board of directors so that the club can file incorporation papers and become legally entitled to raise funds.

Elected to the steering committee was Novato Mayor Robert Carrow, who is the club's attorney. Also elected were: Marshal "Jay" Alexander, Charles P. Davies, Robert

diGrazia, Joseph Gargiulo, Otto Haiungs, Robert Johnston, William Keener, John Panagakis, Eugene Trombley and Bonomolo. "

Bonomolo explained, "If we can raise \$10,000 we would be eligible for a matching \$10,000 from the Bing Crosby Boys Club Foundation. We also would be eligible to draw funds from the United Crusade.

He added as far as any actual club facilities are concerned, we feel we can use some of the city facilities after incorporation, such as the community clubhouse, in order to get the club rolling. Then we can build the organization and acquire the funds needed to get our own permanent headquarters.

We anticipate that when a new Novato city hall is built eventually, we might be able to lease the present city hall building and remodel it to use for our club. Who knows, we might be able to lease for a dollar a year."

April 27, 1966, *Novato Advance* – Boys' Club Incorporation Papers Okayed"

"The Novato Boys Club is scheduled to receive its first donation of money May 5, in a special presentation ceremony at Wells Fargo Bank, Novato Fair.

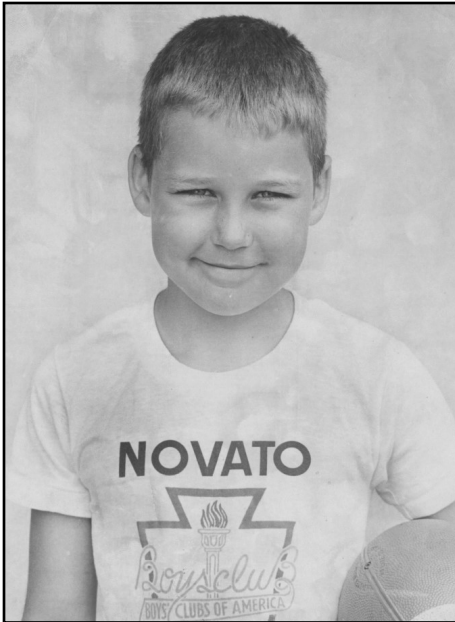
Proceeds from the recent baby show sponsored by Nave Shopping Center merchants will be presented in a "first" ceremony. The sum is estimated at between \$250 and \$300.

Sparkplug of the club, Joe Bonomolo, said that incorporation papers for the new boys' organization have just been approved by the state. Novato's former mayor, attorney Robert Carrow, prepared and filed the incorporation papers for the club."

June 1, 1966, *Novato Advance* - "Joseph Bonomolo was elected president of the Novato Boys' Club at the board of directors meeting in the Community Clubhouse council chambers.



Installation dinner for 1972: Front row, (left to right) Mrs. Harry W. Locke; Chester R. Mac-Phee; Mrs. MacPhee; George M. Mardikian, speaker of the evening; and Mrs. David E Milano, retiring president of the Women's Auxiliary. Back row, (left to right) are: Paul S. Scheller, Harry W. Locke, Joseph Bonomolo, founder, David E. Milano, retiring president and Donald A Leaf, toastmaster.



Appealing Korb Winters, 9, was selected as representing Novato's "Most Typical Boy" by directors of the Novato Boys' Club. His picture will grace all materials - posters, "bonds," etc.—used in the campaign to raise \$100,000 for a Boys' Club building and operation.

Other new officers named by the board were: Jay Alexander, first vice president; Otto Haiungs, second vice president; Eugene Trombley, secretary; and William Keener, treasurer."

July 5, 1967, *Novato Advance* — "Bonomolos Deny Any Discrimination"

"Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Bonomolo, whose son George was involved in a fight at the Western Weekend carnival grounds with a Negro youth, today denied they are segregationists.

In a letter to the *Novato Advance* submitted too late for publication on the editorial page, the couple writes: "We, the Bonomolos, are not segregationists. We have never practiced discrimination in any way."

In 1967, Eugene Trambly, would become president of the Novato Boys' Club.

Oct 1969, *Novato Advance*: "The Novato Boys Club recently was revived with news that a matching \$10,000 from the national group is available if the local club can raise \$10,000 of its own. A fund drive has started. The eventual objective is a fully operational club for boys in Novato".

"The new officers are Dave Moore, treasurer; Bill Nye, secretary; Paul Scheller, vice president; Everett Stanlake, vice president; Dave Milano, president; and Eugene Trombley, chairman; Bill French, public relations chairman; Robert Carrow, legal committee chairman; and directors Rev. Lloyd F. Gebhart, Ralph Eckhardt, Don Shank, Bob Busher and Lorry Cato."

March 1970, *Novato Advance* relates: "A permanent headquarters for a Novato Boys' Club took an unhesitating step toward reality when the Boys' Club board of directors met and approved a lease-purchase agreement to acquire 2.2 acres. The site is located at Lamont and Railroad Avenue (Reichert Ville) and the Boys' Club has a six-month option to buy it."

Feb 11, 1972, *Independent Journal* reports: "Joseph Bonomolo founder and first president of the Novato Boys' Club, has been named chairman of the "Flying Squadron" division, which will conduct the "cleanup" phase of the club's \$100,000 building fund campaign. The drive, which has netted \$62,172, has been mainly aimed at larger contributions, up to \$1,000 and now will swing to a broader base, seeking smaller contributions, said Edward T. Ghirardo, club president." Schilling/ Meyer.

Nov. 8, 1972, *Novato Advance* — "George Schilling, long time Novato businessman and philanthropist, died at the age of 78. His death came 120 days after the death of his friend and business partner, Clara Meyers, who had left him half interest in the Mission Lodge Motel in Novato, providing he outlived her by 150 days.

Mrs. Meyers had willed the other half interest in the motel, valued at \$200,000, to the Novato Boys' Club. Before his death, Schilling said he too intended to leave his share of the motel to the Boys' Club."

"The Boys' Club house, to be built on Wilson Avenue, will be named the "Meyers-Schilling Center" in honor of the two philanthropists. Officials of the club plan to use the profits from the motel's income to operate the club.

Schilling was a native of Germany and came to the United States in 1917, settling soon afterward in the Novato area. He left no survivors.

For more than 20 years he was a partner with the late Henry Meyers in Quality Bakery on Grant Avenue, and for 15 years he was a partner with Meyer's widow in residential development.

To be continued

